

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 14, 2010 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 4:08 p.m. by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby.

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, George Haga, Jamie Ladd, Elise Roe, Rick Steketee, Mischelle Sytsma,

ABSENT: Randy Damstra, Jeff Vandenberg, Randy VanDragt

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Ferro, Planning Director, Mark Fitzpatrick, Parks and Recreation Director

PUBLIC PRESENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 10, 2009 MEETING

It was moved by Sytsma, seconded by Steketee, to approve the minutes of the December 10 meeting

Motion approved.

STATUS OF PROJECTS

1. 383 Pettis Ave. Property Acquisition

Ferro reported that the Township closed on the 383 Pettis property in late December. He stated that he would be submitting a request to the State for an extension of the February 28 completion deadline for the project, since we do not wish to carry out demolition during winter months, due to the proximity of the home to the road. He noted that we will be preparing the home for demolition, by having utility services removed and the well properly abandoned.

2. Raymond Property on Pettis Ave.

Ferro reported that the Subcommittee has met to review the draft conservation easement, and he has had follow-up meetings with Tom Rooks, the possible conservation buyer of the property. Ferro reported that Mr. Rooks has asked for 3 possible revisions to the terms of the conservation easement – 1) language allowing the property owner to transfer the easement from the Township to another organization, such as the Land Conservancy of West Michigan; 2) an alternative procedure, such as mediation or arbitration, for settling any disagreements that may arise between the Township and the property owner regarding the easement; 3) language which specifies the property assessment and taxable value reduction that will result from the easement. Ferro stated he was looking for feedback from the Advisory Board on these points.

(Note: Board member Ladd arrived at the meeting at this time.)

Comments by Board members were not supportive of an easement provision allowing the easement to be transferred by the property owner, in view of the fact that the Township would be paying for the easement, if the project moves forward. Board members had no objections to providing a non-litigation dispute resolution process, with legal counsel input. With regard to provisions concerning property assessment and taxable value, Ferro stated he did not believe that such provisions should be in an easement document. He stated he has encouraged Mr. Rooks to meet with the Assessor, and that he would provide information to the Assessor on the Township's goals in acquiring a conservation easement on the property. Board members were supportive of this approach.

Ferro indicated he would be meeting with Rooks again, with the goal of having the proposed easement final draft for review and action at the February meeting.

3. Racine Property at 4950 Knapp St. NE

Ferro reported that the Committee assigned to develop a possible offer recommendation for this property has met, and is seeking additional information regarding the condition of the property.

4. Proposed “No Disturb Easement” on Property at 2652 Egypt Valley Ave.

Ferro provided Board members with a proposed “no disturb easement” on an 80-foot wide stretch of land adjacent to the road frontage on property being divided into 3 single-family lots on Egypt Creek Ave., north of Knapp St. He stated that this easement was negotiated as a condition of permitting the property owner to average lot sizes in his land division plan for the 11-acre site. Ferro stated that the main intent of the easement is to preserve the rural character along the road, and to screen home sites from view from the road.

Ferro stated acceptance of the easement by the Township Board is required, and the Advisory Board is asked to make a recommendation to the Township Board on the easement acceptance. He also noted that there is language in the easement stating that it is not intended to be a qualifying “conservation easement” under the state conservation easement statute, for income tax purposes, or for property taxation purposes.

Haga added that he felt that since this easement will require monitoring if it is accepted, it made sense to have it under the scope of the Open Space Advisory Board’s oversight.

Ladd asked if the land in question had any sensitive natural features. Ferro stated that a portion of the site is wooded, and that is the only sensitive feature he is aware of.

It was moved by Sytsma, seconded by Roe, to recommend that the Township accept the preservation easement on the Epique Homes property at 2652 Egypt Valley Ave.

Motion passed unanimously.

MARKETING/PROMOTION

Crosby, Roe and Steketee reported on the status of the marketing brochure and a proposed letter to targeted property owners. The Board discussed the draft language in these materials, and the importance of clarifying the distinctions between purchase of land and use of conservation easements.

Fitzpatrick brought up the need to make distinctions between what is considered “park” land and what is considered “open space” land.

The Committee will continue to meet, joined by member Sytsma.

MEMBER AND STAFF COMMENTS

a. Chief Hazy Cloud Park Expansion – Potential Participation in Property Acquisition

Ferro reported he had spoken with Roger Sabine about the Township’s possible financial contribution to the County’s purchase of additional land adjacent to Chief Hazy Cloud Park. He noted that Sabine has no specific schedule for making any additional acquisitions, but would like to have some idea of the level of contribution that the Township would consider.

The consensus of the Advisory Board was not to suggest a specific amount or percentage at this time, but to express our willingness to contribute and participate in a coordinated effort on additional property acquisition.

b. Correspondence from Jeanne Bijkerk-Pippin re: 2400 Grand River Dr. Property

Ferro reported on correspondence received from the property owner at the northeast corner of Knapp St. and Grand River Dr., expressing interest in having a conservation easement placed on the river floodplain portion of her property.

It was observed that the property involved is relatively small, and that the floodplain portion of the site had very little development potential, given its floodplain status. Members asked Ferro to continue discussions with the owner regarding her interest.

c. Management Plan and Schedule for Stewardship Site Visits and Activities – Mark Fitzpatrick

Mark Fitzpatrick, Parks Director, distributed an outline of a proposed management plan and schedule for monitoring and stewardship activities at all of the Township-owned park and open space sites. The schedule identifies specific types of seasonal tasks to be carried out at various Township properties, and contains an outline of needed baseline information for each property that would guide the management efforts at each site.

Advisory Board members commended Mark on the draft document, and observed that it will be a useful tool for the Open Space Protection program.

d. Schedule Property Line Marking at Carl Creek Wetland Preserve

A site visit to the Carl Creek Wetland Preserve was scheduled for Thursday, January 15, at 9:30 a.m., to complete property boundary marking.

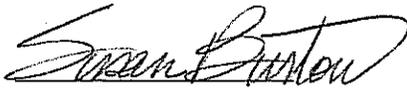
NEXT MEETING DATE

It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 11, 2010, at 4:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Susan Burton
Ada Township Clerk
rs:jf